WHIRRAKEE

October 2003 Vol. 24 No. 9

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
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Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The invited speaker at general meetings starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper.
If a workshop is held prior to the meeting, it will be advertised and it usually starts at 7.00pm.
The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearers listed above, together with the following members:
Lyn Hamilton, Glenise Moors *pro tem.*, Rob Moors and there are 4-6 vacancies!!

Excursions Excursions are conducted irregularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. In addition to local excursions, campouts are held several times each year, usually coinciding with long weekends or holiday periods.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has two active sub-groups:

Fauna Study Group: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.
Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

Bird Observers Group: meets on the first Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizen Building.

Front Cover: Photographer: Liz Martin

An overseers hut at Ned's corner. Another photograph from a recent excursion to this trust for Nature property, this time with the correct name of the photographer!

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 24, No. 9, October 2003

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

CONTENT

Item	Contributor	Page
Recent Bird Observations	Bird Observers Group	3
BFNC Garden News	Matthew Comer	3
News from Peter Ellis' garden	Peter Ellis	4
Friends of Jackass Flat Flora Reserve	Clive Fisher	4
The Past and the Future	Bill Holsworth	5
BFNC Office Bearers and Committees		6
BFNC Conservation activities	Rod and Jan Orr	8
From the Mailbag	Elaine Mathison	10
VFNCA Spring Campout	Portland FNC	11
Ned's Corner (Part 2) (including bird list)	from the TfN website and a recent visit	11
A Fisherman's Tale	Keith Graham	4
Correspondence re: Bendigo FMA	Stuart Fraser	13

Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles.
Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's note
There are a lot of things that need to get into the Whirrakee after the AGM, the secretary's report, the new committee and any vacant positions and the treasurer's report and well as the usual contributions. That meant that there was not enough room for all articles. The treasurer's statement will therefore appear in the next edition (I hope you weren't too curious about it). Please look at the articles on page 6 and 7 which detail the various committees and activities in which the club is engaged and the number of vacancies on these. Hopefully one or two interests you enough to get involved. Doing a job behind the scenes is perhaps not as scary as being on the official committee...

Recent Bird Observations Author: Bird Observers Group

Flame Robin (11), Sedgwick, 3/9/03 - most robins have now left the area, up to 86 birds were seen earlier in the season.
Shining Bronze Cuckoo (1), Sedgwick, 22/8/03, feeding on ground
Fan-tailed Cuckoo (4), Sedgwick, 22/8/03, feeding on ground
Black faced Cuckoo Shrike (4), Sedgwick, 22/8/03, feeding on ground
Rufous Whistler (1), Sedgwick, 28/8/03, and 3/9/03 – first calls heard for the season
Wood Ducks, Kennington, 31/8/03 – a pair brought 10 young out from a nest box but they appear to have been predated as the parents returned later with none.
Swift Parrot (3), Huntly, 19/8/03 – feeding in flowering yellow gums
Red capped Robin (1), Epsom, August 03 – first sighting in this area
Black shouldered Kite (1), Epsom, 15/8/03
Flame Robin (2), Epsom, 15/8/03
Olive backed Oriole (1), Epsom, 15/8/03

This month, with spring on the way, our winter migrants such as the Flame Robin and Swift Parrot are starting to move away from our area. Some of the summer migrants such as the Rufous Whistler and the Cuckoo have arrived and others like the Rufous Songlark and Rainbow Bee-eater should return soon. Movements of these migratory species are not always straightforward though. Last year, some observers noticed that few Rufous Songlarks appeared in this region and suggested the drought was responsible. Another example is that some Fan tailed Cuckoos may remain in the district year round but do not call at other times, so are less noticeable.
There is a good summary of bird movement patterns in our club's "Birds of the Bendigo District" book on page 19. I found it useful to re-read his and refresh my memory about this interesting subject.

News from the Club Garden

by Matthew Comer

The garden looks great at the moment with the arrival of spring. There are ten species of local wattles in bloom with some almost finished and others just starting to flower. The large waxflower near the hall entrance is once again looking superb and there are over twenty other species flowering at the moment. On Saturday 16th August and Saturday 30th August, working bees were held in the garden. A small dedicated group of members worked to weed, spread mulch, and plant some new plants in the garden. Anthony Sheean arranged for the mulch to be delivered to the garden from the council and this was spread in areas where he old mulch had decomposed.
With the garden now fairly well established, it has given us the opportunity to add some of the smaller plants in particular niches where they are sheltered (we have to be careful of careless passersby stomping on them). Some of these are plants that are dear to the hearts of many of our members such as the beautiful Pink Bells (*Tetratheca ciliata*) or the Blue Fingerflower (*Cheiranthera cyanea*). We also put in a couple of rare and unusual Ploughshare Wattle (*Acacia gunnii)* with its uniquely shaped leaves. Other interesting plants we planted include the uncommon *Cryptandra amara* or Bitter Cryptandra, the rare dainty Phebalium (*Phebalium festivum*) from the Whipstick, the *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* from Bagshot with one of the green, yellow and red-flowered variants which occur there and our treasured Whipstick Westringia (*Westringia crassifolia*).
Other species planted included:
Leucopogon virgatus, Common Beard Heath x 2
Dillwynia sericea (Showy Parrot Pea) x 2
Astroloma humifusum (Cranberry Heath) x 2
Hardenbergia violacea (Sarsaparilla) x1
Acacia genistrifolia (Spreading wattle) x 2
Correa reflexa (Common Correa) x 2
Calotis cuneifolia (Purple Burr Daisy) x 3
Chrysocephalum apiculatum (Common Everlasting) x 2
Joycea pallida (Red-anther wallaby Grass) x 3
Olearia floribunda (Heathy daisy Bush) x 1
Prostanthera denticulata (Rough Mint Bush) x1
P. aspalathoides (Scarlet Mint Bush) x 3
Glischrocaryon behrii (Golden Pennants) x 2
Goodenia varia (Sticky Goodenia) x 4
Hibbertia incana (Guinea Flower) x 2

It is also very interesting to see that a number of species are beginning to self seed quite prolifically in the garden, which will look great (and means we don't have to replant them).
Species that are naturally regenerating include:
Pelargonium australe
Geranium sp.
Xerochrysum viscosum (Sticky Everlasting)
Enchylaena tomentosa (Ruby Salt Bush)
Linum marginale (Native Flax)
Gonocarpus sp.
Solanum laciniatum (Kangaroo Apple)
Austrodanthonia species (Wallaby Grass)

Finally, while I was visiting the garden to check out the flowering, I noticed that there were Red Wattlebirds feeding young in a nest in a young Ironbark in the garden. Would this be our first nesting record for the garden? Even thought the Wattlebird is a common species (some say too numerous) it is still great that the garden is providing useful habitat for native fauna.

News from Peter Ellis' Garden

One of the side effects of the drought and water restrictions in my garden was the demise of weeds on the one hand, but the acceleration of growth of a little indigenous ground cover, *Atriplex semibarbata*. This little creeping saltbush has just mushroomed everywhere, probably birds helping to spread the seeds. It was native to my block, but only here and there. Once the total watering ceased and with the dry autumn to mid winter, it formed a massive ground cover with the weeds just being smothered. All I have to do now is hand weed the smaller amounts of grass, clover and marshmallows and carefully spot spray the odd remaining *Oxalis* that has taken many years to reduce to next to nothing using glyphosate. The plus side is that golden everlastings are also spreading naturally and coming up with and through the saltbush. Also spreading naturally in a similar manner, from original plants from Goldfield's Revegetation Nursery, are New Holland Daisy and *Pelargonium australe*. It is just wonderful.
Also on my last visit to the nursery last weekend, I spotted one special plant of Bendigo waxflower originally from Maiden Gully. It is magnificent pink with fine rather than dumpy petals and one of the best forms I have ever seen. Marilyn took cuttings after my display of half parabolas and explanations of joy, so watch out for this one as soon as she can build up stocks. Make sure it is the cutting-grown form as there are also seedlings labelled from Maiden Gully, but these are not the same.

Friends of Jackass Flat Flora Reserve

by Clive Fisher

There are several reserves in Bendigo which are being degraded by the activities of certain people. There is no need for me to name all of the reserves because they are well-known to readers of Whirrakee.

The area I have been concerned with for the past six years is the Jackass Flat Flora Reserve. During the January bushfires at Canberra and in the Victorian Alps and Snowy Mountains, the gate at the Crane Street entrance of the reserve was, I believe, stolen. During the same period, the main walking racks were widened to accommodate large vehicles, namely fire trucks. This has resulted in increased use of the tracks by the trail bike riding fraternity. Also, with the removal of the gate, the reserve was used as a rubbish dump last autumn. However, a report to the DSE resulted in quick removal of the rubbish and a temporary repair of the gate by the stretching of four wires between the gate posts and the placement of two star pickets to add strength to the barrier. The barrier has been removed twice since by person or persons unknown.

A conversation with the Head Ranger at the DSE resulted in a suggestion by him that I and others form a "Friends of the Jackass Flat" group which would undertake such tasks as surveillance of the reserve, and working towards having the notices regarding proper use of the reserve, which were stolen some time ago, replaced. With this in mind, I am appealing for four or more other people to come forward and join me in the formation of a "Friends' group. The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club could act as the umbrella organisation. Interested persons can contact me on telephone 54424818 on most evenings. I believe the sustainability of this urban reserve into the future depends on us, because the DSE do not have the resources to effectively perform these functions.

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE –
The Secretary's 2003 Report to Members

by Bill Holsworth

September 11, and our thoughts are focused by the media on security. The emphasis on terrorists is understandable and of serious concern, but terrorism is not the greatest threat to mankind. When forest management allows the removal of trees from the mountains, and flooding water loaded with silt sweep over villages and farmland, the people of the valley have no security of livelihood or life. When farm management practices allow mosquitoes and snails to proliferate and complete the life cycle of malaria and Bilharzia parasites, the people have no security of health or life. When people are indifferent to the protection of the forests, the management of agriculture, and complex interactions of ecosystems they are threatened with loss of property, loss of health, and loss of life. Closer to home, when mallee dust blocks out the sun, salt pans expand over once fertile orchards and wheat fields, and stage 4 water restrictions become the norm, Australians will have lost the security of living in the best place in the world. Security for each of us, for our children, and for future generations depends on our management of the environment.

To be managed properly forests, farms, fisheries and ecosystems require a sound knowledge of the biology of the species and their inter-relationships with the physical environment. It also requires a society that is concerned that this knowledge is applied correctly. Naturalists can play an important role by encouraging land and water managers to apply the best understanding of ecological processes. They also help by educating the public about the importance of the plants, animals, soil and landscapes that surround them.

At the Annual General Meeting on 10 September the President and members present considered how they had played a role in the past years in creating a more secure environment for the people of Bendigo. We discussed the Club's role in protecting the forests around Bendigo and promoting them to the status of National, State and Regional Parks. We campaigned successfully to protect areas as Flora and Fauna Reserves. We played an important role in the protection of several rare species of plants, birds and mammals. The City and State governments are committed to work in a consultative manner with environment groups, share information and develop options for community participation. The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club now receives priority consideration as a community environmental group because of our natural history knowledge and thoughtful concern for excellence in resource management. It is in the Club's interest and the community's welfare that we maintain this reputation with the Government agencies.

This reputation requires that we have members that know where rare plants and animals live, where ecological processes are exceptional, and where the public can enjoy and appreciate nature. We must also have members who can put this knowledge into a context appropriate to the Government agencies, politicians, and the public. For these reasons we must have the best office bearers, committee members and conveners of special groups that our membership can provide. These leaders need the support, advice, and the hard work of many committee members to successfully achieve these goals. Each Club member should consider his/her abilities and volunteer to assist in the most appropriate roles, and to seek to improve his (her) knowledge and understanding of natural history so that next year they can make an even greater contribution.

We have had excellent office bearers and committee members over the past 58 years that have brought the Club to its present esteemed position. However they have all been mortals and younger members must prepare themselves to take up the challenge. Several members on the 2003-4 list have accepted nomination on a *pro tempore* basis knowing that they will not be able to devote full-time, or the full year, to the position because of health or family commitments. The "Ordinary Members" must come forward to play a part in managing the club. Everyone can assist, even in small ways, to encourage other members and the community to appreciate that studying nature is both enjoyable and important.

The list of Committee positions, chairmen, conveners, etc. is not a complete description of the activities and man-power needs of the Club. It is important that members recognise that without their volunteer efforts much potentially useful work will not get done. Some of the more important activities that could be developed are:

1. Encourage the Curriculum development section of the Dept. of Education to develop study units at several levels that would make use of the CD-ROM Plants and Animals of the Box-Ironbark Forests, (and for the similar CD's in other parts of Victoria.
2. Organise data collection field trips to add to the flora and fauna data on the CD-ROM. Funds are available to support both these activities.
3. Re-survey the activity in all the fauna nest boxes in the Bendigo area and accurately map their location using GPS and compile all data.
4. There are several small reserves that should be surveyed on a regular basis to compile a useful register of plants, birds, and other fauna. Erosion, fire, garbage, and other problems need to be recorded. A "Friends" group for each area could be established to coordinate these activities (e.g. Friends of One-tree Hill, ...Salomon Gully, ...Diamond Hill, ...Jackass Flat, ... Pilchers Bridge, etc.). Our Club can act as an incubator and umbrella organisation to help special interest groups get started.
5. Cooperate with DSE to survey an expanded area for Pink-tailed worm lizards. We have applied for a grant but much more could be done with increased volunteer effort. Because the pink-tailed worm lizard is a rare and endangered species its presence around Bendigo can be used to force better city planning and protection of the forests. Similarly, surveys of the orange bellied parrot and the regent honey-eater need more volunteers.
6. Continuing Education courses in nature study could be offered by the Club. If individuals with special knowledge or abilities wish to offer courses there are members of the club who would assist. The Club's hall could be used.

If involvement in the above list of activities is more than you can handle at present there are smaller roles to play. Take on the responsibility to make sure that tea, coffee and milk supplies are always purchased for the supper. Be the last to leave and make sure that all the toilet lights are turned off and all the doors are locked. Help fold and mail the Whirrakee. Help weed the native plant garden around the hall. Be the welcoming host (hostess) for all new or potential members that come to meetings. Make sure the guest speaker has the projectors, tables, lights, etc. that he (she) requires. Write notes for the Whirrakee on coming events, excursions, new books, or other topics. Become the local expert on one group of plants, one genus or family of birds, or frog calls, or rock types, or ... the list is long.

BFNC OFFICE BEARERS AND COMMITTEES – 2003-4

THE EXECUTIVE

PRESIDENT: Matthew Comer
SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT: Stuart Fraser
JUNIOR VICE-PRESIDENT: vacant
SECRETARY: Bill Holsworth
TREASURER: Stuart Fraser *pro tem.*

ORDINARY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE (Six to eight, more or less)
Rod Orr *pro tem.*, Jane Cleary, Lyn Hamilton, Glenise Moors *pro tem.* [Rob Moors as Past President is ex officio a Committee Member]. We need at least 4 more committee members, but 6 or more would be welcome.

PUBLIC OFFICER: John Burtonclay
This is a Statutory position required by Associations Incorporations Act (1981).

Committee Members usually assume one or more of the following roles, but these roles may also be filled by members who are not members of the Committee (ie. are not expected to attend Committee Meetings on a regular basis). The Convener of a group may, or may not be an Office Bearer.

ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS

- MEMBERSHIP OFFICER: Kate Lottkowitz
- MINUTE SECRETARY (of the Committee): Jane Cleary *pro tem.*
- MINUTE SECRETARY (of the General Meeting): Jane Cleary
- WHIRRAKEE EDITOR: Sabine Wilkens
- WHIRRAKEE DISTRIBUTION (Collecting from the printer, folding, inserts, mailing, etc. The Convener coordinates these activities, and keeps the assistants informed)

A group of about 5 to 8 persons that can meet on the first Wed. of each month from 4:30 to 5:30 – Post office closes at 6:00 pm. A date earlier in the week is possible if the editor agrees.

Convener: Vacant -

Assistants: (Not all these persons are available each month) Lyn Hamilton, Jane Cleary, Jan and Rod Orr, Rob and Glenise Moors, Elaine Matheson, Bev.Colvenor, Bob Ruddick, and others.

- SYLLABUS ORGANISER (or Chairman of the Syllabus Committee): Rod Orr

Monthly Speakers co-ordinator: Rod Orr
Workshops co-ordinator: Rod Orr *pro tem.*
Excursions and Camp-out co-ordinator: Vacant

• LIBRARIAN: Diane Collier

• HALL COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN: Maurie Lewis
Co-ordinators or sub-committee members needed for maintenance and annual cleaning.
• Liaison with City of Greater Bendigo – Bill Holsworth

NATURAL HISTORY TECHNICAL GROUPS

• GARDEN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN: Matthew Comer
Other Members: Jane Cleary, Rod Orr, and others
• BIRD STUDY GROUP CHAIRMAN: To be decided at next meeting.

• FAUNA STUDY GROUP CHAIRMAN: John Burtonclay

• PLANT STUDY GROUP: Potential Group - members could stimulate and co-ordinate data collection on plant distributions using the CD-ROM database, and many other possibilities.

• JUNIOR FIELD NATURALISTS – And other possible groups. What would you like to do?

COMMUNITY INTERACTIONS

CONSERVATION for RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, and URBAN PLANNING Liaison with City and State Government Departments, Receive, study and comment on Park Management Plans, City Planning proposals. Role will be to encourage appropriate members to form working groups for specific projects, and to monitor progress, maintain records of submissions.
• A new, important group concerned with these issues is BUSHLINKS with which we have a close affiliation. Stuart Fraser represents the Club on this group's committee.
• Several Members with topic specific roles: All positions vacant.

NATURE EDUCATION GROUP (Press Releases and other Media, Public Lectures and Excursions, Spring in the Bendigo Bush activities, Co-operation with Schools, University Third Age, etc.)
• Several Members with topic specific roles: All positions vacant.

LAND MANAGEMENT (Responsible for Bennetts Bush Block, Huntly Pound Reserve, Adopt a Highway Clean-up north of Huntly, Liason with DSE, VicRoads, City, etc.)
• Several Members with topic specific roles: All positions vacant.

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

DEVELOPMENT AND PRINTING – Rod Orr

SALES AND MARKETING
• BOOKS – Jane Cleary and Rod Orr
• CD-ROM, Plants and Animals of the Box-Ironbark forests, and other computer based products - Bill Holsworth

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES
Catering, gifts, presentations

FUNCTIONS WITHIN THE CLUB –
• Supper organiser, -Vacant
• Christmas Dinner organiser, etc. -Vacant

BETWEEN CLUBS
• VFNCA, BOC, EV, VNPA, ACF, Friends groups, etc. Several Members have memberships in these other organisations and act as a focal contact.

CLUB AND PUBLIC – Launch of books, etc – Ad hoc,

PERSONAL INTERACTIONS WITHIN THE CLUB –Get well cards, etc. –Vacant

The above list of Committee postions, chairmen, conveners, etc. is not a complete description of the activities and man-power needs of the Club. It is important that members recognise that without their volunteer efforts much potentially useful work will not get done.

Bendigo Field Naturalists' Club's conservation activities

This is a biased and selective 'Report Card' - celebrating some of our successes; recognising some of our failures!

Authors: Jan and Rod Orr

It is important to record something of the past, present and continuing involvement of the club and individual club members in conservation issues.

Some important questions are:
- Have we ever won a conservation 'battle'?
- Are we always seen to be opposing development?
- Have we managed to achieve improvements in land management?
- Have our efforts advanced the cause of conservation?

Habitat Conservation

A great deal of effort has been directed at getting recognition for important natural areas and protecting them as Reserves as shown by the following (incomplete) list:

Axedale Railway Reserve
Bennett's Road Flora & Fauna Reserve
Greater Bendigo National Park
Greater Bendigo Regional Park
Jackass Flat Reserve
Kimbolton State Forest
Mt Sugarloaf Scenic Reserve
O'Keefe Trail
One Tree Hill Regional Park
Pilcher's Bridge Reserve
Rural Whipstick Zone
Salomon's Gully/Boyd Street Reserve
Wellsford State Forest
Whipstick & Kamarooka forests
Wildflower Drive

Some of these areas are still the focus of conservation activities.

Defending existing Parks and Reserves

Even after important areas have been awarded conservation status as a Park or Reserve, continual pressure still must be applied to defend them from inappropriate development or encroachments. There is also a fundamental need to define and protect the conservation status of Flora & Fauna Reserves. Many reserves were never Gazetted (for some reserves in this region, this happened only very recently after recognition of the newly proclaimed Regional and National Parks in the Box-Ironbark areas of central Victoria!). Sometimes, small reserves have had their status reviewed and have even been downgraded to allow subdivision, mining or other developments to occur.

The following list illustrates some of these issues and concerns:
- Jackass Flat and its supposed fire hazard
- The Whipstick and its perceived fire hazard to Huntly
- Kimbolton Forest fire hazard and fuel reduction burning
- Wellsford Forest - fire hazard? thinning? productive(?) forestry V habitat conservation mining (clay, gravel; gold)
- Mt Sugarloaf (threat from mining; request for high-voltage line to Fosterville mine)
- Spring Gully & Diamond Hill (threats from mining - Bendigo Mining activities)
- Destruction of the mining history heritage of the Fosterville area by recent mining
- Neangar Park subdivision threat to large, old trees
- Maiden Gully subdivision threats to densely forested land - Vegetation Protection?
- Bendigo Mining threat to clear forest in the new Regional Park for a mullock dump!
- Pilcher's Bridge subdivision - demand by the developer for road access through densely vegetated bushland (an unused road where the Powerful Owls live)
- Development of Rechter's land at the end of Osborne Lane - threat to the (already rare and threatened) Pink-tailed Worm Lizard

Roadsides
- Road widening - Neilborough Rd; Sutton Grange; Kangaroo Flat/Crusoe Rd
- Roadside remnants - recognition; assessment; protection

Land subdivision

The following selection of examples of urban spread into privately owned forested land shows something of the breadth of our concerns about the impact of urban land development on remnant flora and fauna:
- Burns St (Diamond Hill; Ausfeldii Drive)
- Maiden Gully
- Neangar Park
- Osborne Road/Lane
- Palm Springs
- Pilcher's Bridge
- Spring Gully

Development Issues

We have realised the importance of getting a say at the Land Zoning stage, but, often we have had cause to ask why should this be so difficult, secretive, biased against conservation & in support of almost any form of development.

Some 'Good Ideas' of mixed merit follow:

- Golden Pacific Aluminium at Marong (Bobby Zachariah)
- Inland Port at Marong (Landry lane)
- International 4WD Rally in the Wellsford (Melton entrepreneur)
- Regional Landfill adjacent to the Whipstick State Park (now National Park)
- Farm Forestry Plantation adjacent to the Whipstick section of the National Park

Importance of Educational activities

- Spring in the Bendigo Bush
- Walks through reserves; habitat inspections
- Wildflower Show
- Lectures & talks to groups
- Publications & CDs

Management Plans/Management Committees

- One Tree Hill
- Terricks
- Kooyoora
- Greater Bendigo National Park
- Whipstick & Kamarooka

How do we find out what is going on?

The importance of relationships & networks for information & mutual support should not be underrated! How else can we find out what is really going on?

We have developed links with:

- Council (elected; employed)
- Department of Conservation
- Park Managers/Rangers
- Developers/Entrepreneurs/Miners
- Members of Parliament (State; Federal)
- Business & Commerce
- Friends Groups
- Schools/colleges/university
- BDEC (importance of another local voice on conservation)
- Bushlinks (making our council more accountable to the community; more aware of environmental issues; less gung-ho about development at any cost)
- Other conservation groups naturalists (individuals; groups; associations), local; regional; State; national conservation groups

Many contacts are informal; constant vigilance is required; Newspapers/Radio/TV.

Phone requests for information & advice/questions from interested/concerned residents have always been an important source of information for us as well.

Of course, we must continue to remain in contact and support each other to ensure that we keep up to date with conservation issues.

Making our point

Ambush tactics

- Mark Birrell & the (re-)launch of the Bendigo Bushland Trail
- Marie Tehan & the threat to the (very!) Powerful Owls at Pilchers Bridge

('There's a protest!'; pity about the smell from the sewerage vent!)

Submissions/presentations to Appeal Hearings, Council, politicians, groups etc.

Onsite meetings (it's vitally important to get desk-bound officials out into the natural environment so that they can experience something of reality)

Political activities

The need to be more active led to the formation of BDEC (a second local voice).

Expectations (unrealistic and unfair, sometimes!) from council and conservation department staff (we are volunteers, after all; always prepared to participate; used as a source of information on the natural environment of the region; we are often seen as there to be 'used' - a spectrum of expectations - some are unfair impositions on club and its members) - these are still worthwhile relationships, however, and often lead to exchanges of information.

The most pleasing aspect of this brief presentation was the plethora of memories which led several of our members to relate some of their personal experiences of involvement in conservation on behalf of the Bendigo Field Naturalists' Club. I would like these to be written up and published as a very interesting and often amusing added dimension to this subject.

Thanks to Bill Holsworth, Rob Watkins; Rob Moors; Kerrie Norris; Peter Ellis; Jane Cleary and John Lindner for their contributions and to all other club members who participated during this presentation.

From the Mailbag
Author: Elaine Mathison

Each month the club receives a number of newsletters and magazines: some by subscription and some in exchange for Whirrakee. These are available from the club library.

* * * * * * *

THE VICTORIAN NATURALIST(VFNC)
June 2003

"Little Penguin at Middle Island, Western Victoria: Current Status" reports on the Little Penguin colony at this 1.5ha island off Warrnambool. The birds here display important differences in breeding ecology from penguins in other Australian colonies.

"..Reptile Fauna of Mt Meg Flora and Fauna Reserve" looks at the results of a reptile survey of the Mt Meg reserve, a granite massif outlying the Warby Range State Park in north-eastern Victoria. It contains six broad habitat types in which fourteen reptile species were recorded.

"...Burrow Use by the Long-nosed Potoroo" outlines the results of a study in south-western Victoria, near Terang. Members of the Potoroo family normally use tussocks and thick grass for shelter; it is possible that burrows may provide additional shelter.

"...Additions to Victoria's Protected Areas.." gives details of a number of recent land purchases which add significant areas to existing reserves. A number of Victoria's most threatened ecosystems are included in the latest aquisitions.

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BIRD OBSERVER(BOCA)
August 2003

- Introduced species and the Common Myna: a summary of results of the BOCA garden birds survey 1997-2000
- Blue-winged Kookaburra: differences between subspecies and sexes, biology and lifestyle
- Tanami Birding: what species are likely to be seen on this outback road, and where to look for them
- A Flying Visit to Sweers Island: a "flyaway" trip includes birdwatching in the Gulf of Carpentaria

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PARKWATCH(VNPA)
September 2003

"Firewood and the Future for our precious Woodlands" outlines the issues that are still facing the woodlands areas of Victoria and other states.

"Lederderg State Park": Geoff Durham's memories of growing up in Bacchus Marsh, with many adventures in the nearby bush areas. Picnic areas and hiking opportunities are suggested.

This issue of Parkwatch also contains the VNPA annual report for 2002-03

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Also received recently:

*Castlemaine Naturalist(CFNC) September 2003
*Ballarat Naturalist(BFNC) September 2003
*Geelong Naturalist(GFNC) September 2003
*Newsletter(Maryborough FNC) Feb - Aug 2003
*Newsletter(Echuca Birdwatchers) September 2003
*Land for Wildlife News Aug/Sept 2003
*Field Nats News(FNCV) September 2003

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Portland Field Naturalists' Camp Inc Spring Campout 2003

Venue – Cape Bridgewater Holiday Camp 10 - 12th October 2003

Members of the Portland Field Naturalist' Club Inc are delighted to invite fellow field naturalists affiliated with the VFNCA to attend the Spring Campout to be hosted by our club on Friday October 10th through to Sunday the 12th 2003.

Venue facilities and accommodation will be located at the Cape Bridgewater Holiday Camp overlooking magnificent Bridgewater Bay near Portland.
It is envisaged that a number of activities will be on offer including field trips to look at our wonderful spring wildflowers and terrestrial orchids, as well as trips to view the nearby seal colony at Cape Bridgewater, Mt Richmond National Park, Cape Nelson State Park, Swan Lake – Discovery Bay Coastal Park, as well as the Australian Gannet colony at Point Danger and some of our wonderful scenery.

Activities
Saturday 11th October 2003
- Full day orchid tour:
  Trip to Bridgewater Lakes, Mt Richmond National Park and Swan Lake
- Full day coastal tour:
  Trip to Cape Nelson and Point Danger Gannet colony.
- Half day coastal tour:
  Trip to view seal colony – Cape Bridgewater
- Half day coastal tour:
  Trip to Bridgewater Lakes – Discovery Bay

Sunday 12 October 2003
- Half day coastal tour:
  White's Beach – Discovery Bay
- Half day coastal tour:
  Seal colony – Cape Bridgewater
- Half day coastal tour:
  Freshwater springs and blowholes – Cape Bridgewater
- Sunday lunch – Mt Richmond National Park summit

To register for what promises to be a memorable campout please fill out the booking and personal record forms (see pages 12 and 13 in the July *Whirrakee)*
A finalised schedule of event would have been sent to all clubs by now.

Ned's Corner
(part 2, from the TfN website)

Trust for Nature has removed domestic stock from Ned's Corner, one of the largest private properties in Victoria, in order to reduce the negative consequences of over-grazing on local plant communities. As native vegetation regenerates soil will stabilize, preventing soil loss into the river system, improving water quality for plants, animals and people as far away as Adelaide.
The Murray River is Australia's greatest waterway, an integral part of our culture, heritage and economy. Sadly, the natural heritage values of the Murray and of the entire Murray-Darling Basin are threatened by salinity, erosion, habitat destruction and changes to pre-European flood patterns.
A concerted community effort to restore the Murray is, however, now under way, and Trust for Nature's purchase of Ned's Corner will assist the restoration effort by securing habitat for 35 kilometres along the Murray corridor.
Used largely for sheep and cattle grazing since the 1850s, Ned's Corner Station is a mosaic of rare landforms and threatened ecosystems. At its centre is an ancient alluvial plain dominated by Saltbushes and other plants adapted to life in a harsh environment. Other vegetation and landscape types include Mallee and Black Box woodlands, corridors of Murray Pine on sand ridges and dunes, and magnificent corridors of River Red Gum. These plant communities and the diverse fauna they support make Ned's Corner Station a unique semi-arid landscape in Victoria. Regionally rare or nationally threatened species on the property include Bush Stone Curlews and Regent Parrots.

Community conservation
As with all Trust for Nature owned properties, we will be calling for interested people in the local community to work with our expert conservation management staff in managing, researching and protecting this important landscape. Ned's Corner Station will also provide an important addition to the Mildura Biosphere project – another community driven conservation program in for the Murray and Darling Rivers.

Erratum: The beautiful photos in the last edition and on the front cover were taken by Liz Martin. Apologies for getting this wrong.

An Observation by Glenise Moors from a recent visit to Ned's Corner Station

I watched a Little Friarbird gripping a leaf just below the petiole and sliding down to the tip, scraping all the stuff [lerps and psyllids] off, then eating it. I was only about 3 metres away. The bird fed like this for about 10 minutes. The tree was a Black Box.

Bird List For Ned's Corner – 4/7/03 to 6/7/03
compiled by Glenise Moors

Emu - 6 eggs in nest	Australian Pelican
Darter	Great Cormorant
Little Black Cormorant	Pacific Heron
Little Pied Cormorant	Great Egret
White-faced Heron	Sacred Ibis
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Black Swan
Pacific Black Duck	Grey Teal
Chestnut Teal	Maned Duck
Black Kite	Whistling Kite
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Little Eagle
Red-breasted Button-quail	Eurasian Coot
Masked Lapwing	Caspian Tern
Peaceful Dove	Feral Pigeon
Common Bronzewing	Crested Pigeon
Galah	Little Corella
Yellow Rosella	Mallee Ringneck
Red-rumped Parrot	Fan-tailed Cuckoo
Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo	Owlet Nightjar
Laughing Kookaburra	Southern Boobook
Welcome Swallow	Tree Martin
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Richard's Pipit
Red-capped Robin	Blackbird
Grey Shrike-thrush	Grey Fantail
Chestnut-crowned Babbler	Willie Wagtail
White-winged Fairy-wren	Superb Fairy-wren
Chestnut-rumped Thornbill	Weebill
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Yellow Thornbill
Southern Whiteface	Brown Treecreeper
Noisy Miner	Little Friarbird
Blue-faced Honeyeater	Striped Honeyeater
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Orange Chat
White-plumed Honeyeater	White-fronted Chat
Mistletoebird	Striated Pardalote
White-winged Chough	Apostlebird
Black-faced Woodswallow	Magpie-lark
Pied Butcherbird	Australian Raven
Australian Magpie	House Sparrow

A brochure for anybody who wants to help secure Ned's Corner are available from the editor or the secretary. If room permits, one will be included in the next *Whirrakee*.

A Fisherman's Tale

By Keith Graham

Our family has lived close to the Loddon River since 1870 and Phyllis and I have lived on its bank for almost 50 years, so fishing and fish have been my close interest. This stretch of the Loddon between Bridgewater and Laanecoorie is typical of the river below the Laanecoorie weir, deep wide holes joined by narrower waters flowing over gravel bars with under-cut banks and lots of logs.

My first memories of fishing was with my father in the late 1930s, long bamboo poles, heavy green cord, floaters and large hooks. The target, of course, was the Murray Cod, but sadly, even then, the native fish population had gone into rapid decline His explanation for this was the construction of the Loddon Weir at Fernihurst (circa WW1) but it also coincided with the advent of the introduced Red Fin or English Perch.

From the 1940s through to the 1970s, we and many others fished the area for many good catches of Red Fin or occasionally an introduced Tench. The only Cod we saw were old fish that had died, mostly 30kg plus.

The years 1973-74-75 were very wet years when the European carp invaded the Loddon even its smallest tributaries and farm dams. Within five years, the carp had become dominant and Red Fin numbers fell away. I despaired for the river and future fishing prospects and when I heard that the Fisheries and Game department intended to stock the river with natives, I was astonished.

How could our native fish survive against the competition of the Carp where the aggressive Red Fin had failed?

How wrong I was, soon Yellow-Belly (Golden Perch) began to be landed and later Murray Cod, reintroduced to the River, appeared.

Now the chances of catching a native fish are better than they have been for 70 years.

The other heartening fact is that few of the carp we now catch are less than 2kg, suggesting the Cod and Yellow-Belly are predating the smaller fish. Hopefully, if this trend continues it will prove to be a great conservation effort and my prediction would only be a Museum piece will never eventuate.

A Correspondence re: Bendigo Forest Management Area

The Hon. John Thwaites
Minister for the Environment, Water and Victorian Communities
1 Treasury Place
East Melbourne 3002

Dear Minister
On June 22nd we attended a meeting (workshop) 'Shaping the future management of our State Forest' called by the Department of Sustainability and Environment in the Bendigo FMA.

We are writing to ask you to clarify what appears to us as a conflict of vision and philosophy, between what was said on the day and the Box-Ironbark and Woodlands Investigation Final Report that has been accepted by this government. It is our understanding that the emphasis within the final report, its vision and philosophy, can be summed up within the council's message on page v, 'setting up a system of parks and reserves is important but it is only one step in preventing biodiversity loss. A change of management practices for the whole region, with a focus on protection of species, is also critical in reversing the present pattern of loss.' Further on page vi, 'Let this generation have the wisdom to make the necessary changes to management practices in the region to reverse the pattern of biodiversity loss in the ecosystem.'

On the day it appeared to us that the emphasis was the old multi-use philosophy, with the emphasis on word 'use'.

Even though the final report allows for the forests to be used for many purposes, for example, timber, honey, extractive industries, recreation, the recommendations for each of the uses contain within them the underlying ideal that the conservation and enhancement of species is paramount. We take this to mean that 'use' does not dominate conservation, but rather conservation of species is the underlying philosophy within these forests, and that those uses that are allowed should be managed in such a way as to not damage this vision.

On June the 22nd we spent a tightly controlled two hours rehashing all old arguments of the last six years. The many groups and individuals who have given input to the Box-Ironbark and Woodland Report were present on the day. They discussed the future management of the Box-Ironbark forest again. Up until that point we had believed these had been resolved within the Box-Ironbark Report. It appears to us that the Department, specifically forestry, is being allowed to reinvent how the forests are to be managed. After all, they control the inputs, how these inputs are gained, and will write the final report containing the guidelines that will impact upon these forests. Does this now mean that the conclusions concerning the management of forests, found in the final report, will be altered? In other words have we started again?

It would be better to all those concerned if a disinterested panel, sought these inputs from the public, and wrote the final report on how our forests are to be run. When we say disinterested we mean this in the true sense of the word.

We hope that the philosophy and vision stated in the final Forest Management Plan builds upon and reinforces the philosophy and vision found within the final report of the Box-Ironbark Forests and Woodland Investigation. We would hope that this is also the government's position.

As the discussions have started for the development of the FMP we would appreciate a reply as soon as possible, as we wish to circulate the information throughout the FMA to interested people and organisations.

Yours faithfully

D. Stuart Fraser

Convenor of the Bendigo and District Environment Council inc.
Signing for and on behalf of:

Bendigo and District Environment Council Inc.

Bushlinks: A coalition of Bendigo Environment and Community Groups

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Bendigo Box Ironbark National Parks Group

Wellsford Watch

Mt Sugarloaf Protection Society

Department of Sustainability and Environment

8 Nicholson Street
PO Box 500 East Melbourne
Victoria 3002 Australia
Telephone: (03) 9637 8000
Facsimile: (03) 9637 8100
ABN: 90 719 052 204
DX 210098

Our Ref: MW005493

Mr D Stuart Fraser
12 Bambara Close
BENDIGO VIC 3550

- 4 SEP 2003

Dear Mr Fraser

BOX IRONBARK AND WOODLANDS INVESTIGATION

Thank you for your letter dated 5 July 2003 to the Honourable John Thwaites MP, Minister for Environment, concerning the Bendigo Forest Management Area (FMA) Forest Management Plan. As this matter falls within my area of responsibility, I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Minister.

I am pleased that you participated in the workshops on 'Shaping Our Forests Future' in June this year. These workshops provided an opportunity for participants to identify the issues and opportunities that they considered important in the development of the forest management plan for the Bendigo FMA. As you have noted, some of these matters have been raised in previous forums associated with the management of the forests in the region.

The plan is being developed to guide the sustainable management of State forest in the Bendigo FMA. The management plan will be consistent with the government approved Environment Conservation Council (ECC) recommendations and relevant legislation.

In 2002, the Victorian Government indicated that it's vision for the box-ironbark forests and woodlands is one of communities and Government working in partnership to achieve the best and fairest balance. The Government understands that community involvement and leadership is crucial to the protection of this unique environment for future generations.

In implementing the Government's community landscape vision for the box-ironbark forest and woodlands, the forest management plan will be developed in consultation with the community and will consider the range of values and uses of State forest, including biodiversity protection, consistent with the approved ECC recommendations.

Thank you for your participation in the forest management planning process and your interest in these important issues.

Yours sincerely

Ken King
Executive Director, Parks and Forests

Privacy Statement
*Any personal information about you or a third party in your correspondence will be collected and protected under the provisions of the **Information Privacy Act 2000**. It will only be used or disclosed to appropriate ministerial or departmental staff in regard to the purpose for which it was provided, unless required or authorised by law. Enquiries about access to information about you held by the Department should be directed to the Manager Privacy, Department of Sustainability & Environment, PO Box 500, East Melbourne, 3002.*

Victoria
The Place To Be

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

General Meeting

Wednesday, October 8, 7.30pm
Peter Menkhost, from the Arthur Rylah Institute, will talk about 'Classification of Threatened Fauna in Victoria - definition & assessment of 'Threatened Fauna'; what it means to be on the list.'

Wednesday, November 12, 7.30pm
Paul Sinclair from Environment Victoria will talk about 'The importance of environmental flows in rivers, streams and wetland areas.'

Wednesday, December 10, t.b.a.
Christmas Dinner followed by a talk from Chris Tzaros about'Birds of the Box-Ironbark Forest'

Bird Observers Group

This group meets (in the clubrooms) on the first Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm. Please confirm with Kerrie Norris (ph 54478017)

Fauna Group

This group meets (in the clubrooms) on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm. For details of the next meeting contact John Burtonclay (5439 5710) or Bill Holsworth (5443 4063)

Spring in the Bendigo Bush

Sunday, October 5 11 - 4.00pm
Picnic/Nature Walk in the Wellsford Forest, Bendigo Regional Park.
Bring your lunch and eat it before walking through the forest.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.

W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals.
It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Natural Resources and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

Bushmonth October

Many Trust for Nature protected properties are open for exploration. Please ring 1800 999933 or (03) 96709933 for details or get more information on the internet at: www.tfn.org.au

The open properties are listed below. A map and descriptions are available from the editor.

Saturday 4th October
Bjerking Property (staying at Aquila Mount Erupt Eco-Lodges, Dunkeld)
Myers property, North Boundary Road, Dunkeld (staying at Royal Mail Hotel)
Ralph Illidge Sanctuary, Warnambool – Cobden Road, Naringal
Sunday 5th October
Clarkesdale Bird Sanctuary, Linton-Piggoreet Road, Linton
Mount Elephant, Derrinallum
Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th October
Ned's Corner Station (approximately 81 km west of Mildura) Accommodation, camping cottages, caravan park)
Saturday 18th October
North East Box Ironbark Discovery Tour (touring the Dooley and Jones property)
Neilson and Kilgour property, Nettleton Road, Monbulk
Sunday 19th October
Dunmoochin, Dunmoochin Road, Cottles Bridge
Melbourne Wildlife Sanctuary, Ring Road, Latrobe University, Bundoora
Wanderslore, Launching Place, Warburton Highway, Launching Place
Saturday 25th October
Henry's Creek Sanctuary, Henry's Road, Loch
Wuchatsch Reserve, Forest Drive, Nyora.
Sunday 26th October
Churchill Island Visitor's Centre, Phillip Island Nature Park.